

## REAP History

One hundred green lights came on in the room. Not a single red light was among them. It was all systems go for what was about to become landmark legislation in the State of Iowa. Its formal name is Resource Enhancement And Protection. Most people simply call it REAP.



### REAP Oral History: Architects Recount 25 Years Later

#### Legislative History

Those green lights are in the House Chambers in Iowa's State Capitol. Tuesday, April 25, 1989 was when they were turned on, indicating that all 100 members of Iowa's House of Representatives voted "yea" for the REAP bill. No party lines were drawn. Democrats and Republicans alike were pleased with what they saw in the bill.

The bill then went to the Iowa Senate for its action. The Senate, after some refinements which are best classified as fine tuning, passed the bill on May 2, 1989 with a vote of 40 "yeas" and 6 "nays." While not unanimous, the Senate also soundly approved REAP. The bill then returned to the House since the Senate made some changes. The red lights once again remained off as 91 green lights shined when the House of Representatives adopted the refined bill.

The bill was now on its way to Governor Branstad's office for his consideration and signing into law. He signed it on May 27, 1989 and the REAP legislation became effective immediately on that day. REAP was given \$15 million for its first year of implementation. \$8 million came from state lottery receipts and \$7 million came from state tax receipts.

The story of the REAP bill is somewhat unusual in three ways. First, it was enacted during the first legislative session in which it was introduced. Legislation of this magnitude typically takes two or more sessions to get passed. Second, provisions of REAP were immediately effective upon the Governor's signature. Laws are usually written to become effective at the beginning of a fiscal year, which would have been July 1, 1989 for REAP. However, lawmakers felt it was critical that REAP commence as soon as possible. Third, REAP was appropriated \$15 million upon its enactment. Bills that create new programs are often passed, but money is not provided to begin implementation. Money sometimes lags behind two or more years before programs can really take effect. REAP; on the other hand, was right away allowed to begin providing benefits to the people of Iowa.

The original REAP law authorized a maximum appropriation of \$30 million per year for 10 years. This level of funding has never been realized. Actual appropriations have ranged between \$7 million and \$20 million, with an overall average of about \$11.4 million per year. In 1996, the legislature changed the authorized maximum appropriation from \$30 million to \$20 million per year and extended the program's life through 2021.



### Groundwork for REAP

REAP's success in getting this prompt attention did not come easily. Lots of time, effort, and expertise went into designing and gaining support for the program. In fact, four years of work went into REAP before it was introduced in bill form. This advance work has paid off since the program remains solid as originally designed.

A sound foundation for REAP was established through the work of a special legislative study committee on recreation, tourism, and leisure. This committee began working in 1985 and submitted its final recommendations in 1987. One of the recommendations was for the state to protect more of its open spaces. In response, the State Legislature directed the Department of Natural Resources to prepare an Iowa Open Space Protection Plan by July 1, 1988. The legislature included in its directive an overall goal of having 10% of all land in the state under some form of public protection by the year 2000. The intent was to accomplish this goal in a number of ways, including public land acquisition, leases, conservation easements, local zoning, roadside vegetation management, and continuation of the conservation reserve program.

While all this study activity was going on, a group that would eventually be called the "REAP Alliance" was forming. This group, made up of representatives from 25 private conservation-related organizations, worked with interested legislators to begin designing REAP. It was clear from the onset that REAP would need a variety of programs and beneficiaries to be successful. [Cities](#), [counties](#), and [private conservation organizations](#) would have to join DNR efforts in accomplishing open space protection goals. [Soil conservation](#) elements would need to be incorporated since soil is our state's most precious resource. Introduction and management of [native prairie grasses and wildflowers along streets, roads, and highways](#) could reduce maintenance costs while providing wildlife habitat and scenic areas. [Preservation of the state's historical resources](#) are important, so it too was included. Anyone and everyone involved in conservation know how important education is to achieve long term commitment by people to the well-being of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, a [conservation education](#) element was put into REAP. And, as the saying goes ---- "last but not least"----- the creators of REAP felt that it was vital to provide plenty opportunities for interested citizens and organizations throughout Iowa to be [actively involved in the program](#).